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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/07/07

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#### ARTICLES:

(1) Poll on Fukuda cabinet, political parties, Defense Ministry scandals, MSDF Indian Ocean refueling legislation, gas tax for road construction

ASAHI (Page 10) (Full)  
December 4, 2007

#### Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Figures in parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted Nov. 3-4 unless otherwise specified.)

Q: Do you support the Fukuda cabinet?

Yes 44 (45)  
No 36 (34)

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 31 (31)  
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 23 (24)  
New Komeito (NK) 4 (3)  
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 (2)  
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 2 (1)  
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)  
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)  
Other political parties 0 (1)  
None 31 (32)

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No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 7 (6)

Q: What do you think about Prime Minister Fukuda's job performance so far? (One choice only)

Beyond expectations 4  
Up to expectations 30  
Short of expectations 13  
No expectations from the start 48

Q: Former Administrative Vice Defense Minister Moriya has now been arrested on bribery charges, and a Defense Ministry contractor is now alleged to have padded its bills for equipment delivered to the Self-Defense Forces. There are now such suspicions over the Defense Ministry. Do you think the government and ruling parties are responding to these issues in an appropriate way?

Yes 22  
No 65

Q: The House of Councillors once decided to summon Finance Minister Nukaga over the Defense Ministry's issues. However, the House of Councillors later decided not to do so. Do you think it was good?

Yes 19  
No 65

Q: Do you support the idea of forming an LDP-DPJ coalition government?

Yes 30  
No 55

Q: On Nov. 22, Prime Minister Fukuda met DPJ President Ozawa and proposed policy talks over national and social security issues. DPJ President Ozawa did not respond, taking the position that discussions should be held in the Diet. Which one do you support?

Prime Minister Fukuda 33  
DPJ President Ozawa 48

Q: The U.S. and other countries have sent naval vessels to the

Indian Ocean for antiterror operations in Afghanistan. The Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which was for the Self-Defense Forces to back up their naval operations in the Indian Ocean, expired on Nov. 1, and the SDF discontinued its activities there. Do you think Japan should resume SDF activities there?

Yes 44 (43)

No 44 (41)

Q: The government has presented a bill to create a new law replacing the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, and the bill is now being discussed in the Diet. This legislation limits SDF activities in the Indian Ocean to fuel and water supply for a period of one year, and it does not require the government to ask the Diet for its approval of SDF activities there. Do you support this legislation?

Yes 36 (35)

No 43 (43)

Q: If this legislation is voted down in the House of Councillors,

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the ruling coalition is thinking of revoting on it in the House of Representatives to enact it into law with a concurring majority of two-thirds or more. Do you think it is appropriate to do so?

Yes 46

No 37

Q: Do you think the House of Representatives should be dissolved as soon as possible for a general election, or do you otherwise think there is no need to do so?

Dissolve as soon as possible 34 (35)

No need to do so 55 (57)

Q: If you were to vote now in a general election, which political party would you like to vote for in your proportional representation bloc?

LDP 32

DPJ 32

NK 4

JCP 3

SDP 2

PNP 1

NPN 0

Other political parties 1

N/A+D/K 25

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government? (Figures in parentheses denote the results of a survey taken Oct. 10-13.)

LDP-led coalition government 37 (33)

DPJ-led coalition government 36 (32)

Q: The gasoline tax is originally 29 yen per liter. However, this gas tax is set at 54 yen per liter with an additional rate of 25 yen for road maintenance, improvement, and construction. This additional portion's duration is legally up until March next year. After that, the gas price will go down. Meanwhile, the road-related budget will decrease to almost a half. Do you think the additional rate of 25 yen for roads should be continued?

Yes 21

No 68

Q: The government is thinking of incorporating gasoline taxes and other road revenues into the general account budget so that the road revenues can be used for other purposes. Do you support this way of thinking?

Yes 46

No 41

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Dec. 1-2 over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 1,969 persons (57 PERCENT ).

(2) Ruling parties paving way for enacting new antiterrorism bill

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SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)  
December 7, 2007

With the Dec. 15 closing of the current Diet session just around the corner, the government and ruling parties yesterday continued coordination to extend again the ongoing Diet session by mid-January and to enact a new antiterrorism special measures bill into law by taking a second vote on the bill in the House of Representatives based on the so-called "two-thirds" article (of the Constitution). Also the heads of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's factions have begun paving the way for re-adopting the bill in the Lower House by taking advantage of such occasions as their faction meetings. Since the opposition camp has remained in its position to thoroughly oppose the bill, the ruling and opposition camps will likely engage in a fierce battle in the middle of next week.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura and LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima discussed yesterday afternoon a plan to re-extend the Diet session. Oshima met intermittently also with Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki and New Komeito Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshio Urushibara.

The Upper House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense yesterday carried out deliberations on the new antiterrorism bill. The committee has spent only 11 hours and 30 minutes. There have left only two days -- Dec. 11 and 13 -- for deliberations in the committee. It is, therefore, difficult for the Upper House to secure deliberation time (about 40 hours) on a par with the Lower House.

Since the Lower House can extend the Diet session only one more time, the government and ruling coalition have determined that if the session is extended about one week, it will be difficult to enact the bill during such a short period. Assuming that the Upper House would not take a vote on the bill within 60 days after receiving it from the Lower House, which means that the upper chamber voted down the bill, the government and ruling bloc are pressing forward with coordination to substantially extend the session until mid-January.

In consideration of Prime Minister Fukuda's strong enthusiasm for enacting the bill, there is a growing mood in the ruling camp that a lengthy extension of the session and taking a second vote in the Lower House will be unavoidable.

Hidenao Nakagawa, former LDP secretary general, stated in a meeting yesterday of the Machimura faction: "We will use all necessary measures which the Constitution allows. If they say the number of days for deliberations is insufficient, we will do our best to re-extend the session."

Taku Yamasaki, former LDP vice president, who was reluctant to the lower chamber overriding the upper chamber's vote, said yesterday:

"We have no choice but to extensively extend the session. We will pass the new antiterrorism bill thorough the Diet during the current session at any cost. I want the Prime Minister and the party executives to have courage and determination."

Former Secretary General Taro Aso stated:

"For the sake of national interests, we must take a second vote on

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the bill in the Lower House. If 60 days are passed without the Upper House taking final action, the existence of the chamber will be called into question."

The New Komeito, which was cautious about re-adopting the bill in the Lower House, has assumed since late November a stance of allowing the idea. One senior New Komeito member said: "We no longer have any choice but to allow the Lower House to take a vote on the bill."

Meanwhile, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) Upper House Caucus Chairman Azuma Koshiishi said yesterday in a press conference:

"There is no change in our policy of scrapping the bill. Although the Constitution allows the Lower House to override the upper chamber's votes, it is nothing to be taken casually. (If the upper chamber's vote is overridden), we will submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Fukuda and force him to dissolve the Lower House."

Fukuda told reporters last night: "I'm considering all possibilities." When asked at noon yesterday by reporters whether he decided to take a second vote in the Lower House, Fukuda responded with a smile: "Who took a peek of my mind?" He also said: "I strongly believe that the Diet will enact the bill into law in the end."

(3) Editorial: North Korean nuclear programs a real threat

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
December 7, 2007

To our surprise, this year's National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), a report representing the consensus view of U.S. intelligence agencies, concluded that Iran had frozen its nuclear program in the fall of 2003 and has not resumed it since. This must be a blow to the Bush administration which has brandished the possibility of using force against Iran, labeling it a threat. A big question mark has now been put on Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program by the best brains of the intelligence agencies, reversing their traditional view.

This brings to mind the Iraq war which was launched by the Bush administration in 2003 under the pretext of dealing with the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). No WMD were ever found, and an independent investigative body in the United States submitted a report to the President concluding that almost all the decisions were completely wrong.

The intelligence agencies reportedly tried to collect and analyze information based on that bitter lesson. In view of the past mistakes, the NIE report cannot be concluded to be totally correct. If President Bush and Vice President Cheney have kept making hard-nosed statements in the knowledge of the view of the intelligence agencies, they would be suspected to have tried to manipulate public opinion. At least, the chicken game of U.S. provoking Iran and Iran reacting sharply must come to an end.

The report has also created a stir in the UN Security Council which has been discussing additional sanctions against Iran. The international trend is changing. Nevertheless, there are some

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grounds for sanctions. It is wrong for President Ahmadinejad, who has turned a deaf ear to UN calls for ending its uranium enrichment program and other matters, to declare a victory. The people would become happier if the nuclear issue were brought to an end by Iran's extending cooperation to shed light on the suspicions.

As for North Korea, it has now found it difficult to disable its nuclear-related facilities and declare all nuclear programs before the end of the year. According to Assistant Secretary of State and chief U.S. delegate to the six-party talks Christopher Hill, who recently visited Pyongyang, there is a gap in views between the United States and North Korea over the contents of declaration of

nuclear programs. There is a possibility that because the United States is unlikely to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism before year's end, the North having hardened its stance.

There have been reports that President Bush sent letters to the other nations involved in the six-party talks. The process of dismantling nuclear programs has been deadlocked. The United States looked rushing toward delisting North Korea. Suspicions over North Korea must be examined closely. The allegation that North Korea helped Syria develop a nuclear program also needs a clear explanation.

In his State of the Union Address in early 2002, President Bush described North Korea, along with Iran and Iraq, as an "axis of evil." Iraq has not developed nuclear weapons and Iran's nuclear program remains unclear. Five years later, the North Korean threat must be clear to the American people. The United States was on alert against the Saddam's Iraqi regime and Iran's trends. But in reality, a "real threat" to the international community is North Korea, which has actually conducted a nuclear detonation.

The Bush administration, which is scheduled to leave office in just over one year, should take such facts to heart and concentrate on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

(4) Political horse-trading over DPRK's declaration of its nuclear programs likely to continue into next year, reflecting US President's wishes

SANKEI (Page 7) (Full)  
December 7, 2007

Morimichi Imabori, Makiko Takita; Takashi Arimoto, Beijing

The six-party talks to discuss the North Korean nuclear issue sees political horse-trading continuing between the United States and North Korea since the November summit talks between Japan and the U.S. The U.S., which reaffirmed cooperation with Japan during the summit, has prodded North Korea to make a complete and accurate declaration of its nuclear programs. President Bush sent a personal letter to North Korean Secretary General Kim Jong Il. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, who presides over the six-party talks, yesterday indicated that a meeting of the chief delegates to the six-party talks would not occur until next year. Before the end-of-the-year deadline for the submission by North Korea of a declaration of its nuclear programs, a tug of war between the U.S. and North Korea is likely to intensify even further. The Sankei Shimbun probes into the movements of Japan, the U.S., and North Korea after the Japan-U.S. summit in November.

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"I'm not satisfied," President George W. Bush told Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda during the Japan-U.S. summit held in the White House on Nov. 16. This remark came out from Bush when Fukuda referred to the start of the process of disabling nuclear facilities (in North Korea).

That remark surprised the Japanese side. At that time Japan thought that the disablement process was going smoothly in order to implement the six-party agreement reached in October as a group of experts arrived in Yongbyon.

With regard to the declaration of nuclear programs, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Hill, the U.S chief negotiator in the six-party

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talks, thought that the North Koreans were unlikely to make a full declaration from the start. So Hill planned to have the North declare its nuclear programs several times, even though they would likely be insufficient. In this way, the declaration would gradually become full and accurate.

Meanwhile, the White House was cautious about the North Korea's "salami tactics," under which the North calls for aid in return for providing information bit by bit. Bush's remark above in this sense

could be taken as "expressing discontent toward the current state of negotiations," a source involved in the negotiations noted.

Reflecting Bush's wishes, Hill told his North Korean counterpart when he visited that country in early this month: "It's important for you to make a full and accurate declaration even though it is your first draft of a declaration."

In response, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan told Hill: "Haste makes waste." Kim did not explain the reason why he could not attend the planned session of the chief delegates to the six-party talks slated for Dec. 6.

On the night of Dec. 5, Hill, who tended to give an optimistic expectation about the negotiations, admitted, "Some differences exist."

Although the tug of war has been continuing between Washington and Pyongyang over the declaration of nuclear programs, one Japanese government official said with a sigh of relief after the Japan-U.S. summit: "The President has clearly realized controversial points, including the importance of the abduction issue."

Before and after the Japan-U.S. summit there was the speculation that the U.S. might decide to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, so some in Japan suspected whether matters related to the North Korean issue were correctly reported to the President. If the North were to be delisted, that would deal a big blow to the Fukuda administration, given its unstable situation in the Diet, where the ruling bloc fails to hold a majority in the Upper House.

Fukuda and Bush reportedly exchanged in-depth views on the abduction issue.

Bush questioned Fukuda in rapid succession. "Do you know the identities of the victims of abductions?" "Can you affirm who the kidnappers were?" Fukuda handed a set of files written in English regarding the abduction issue to Bush and told him: "Resolving the abduction issue together with the nuclear and missile issues is

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vitally important for Japan." In response, Bush said: "I will never (sic) forget the abduction issue."

Fukuda did not bring up the question of delisting North Korea. An aide to the prime minister said: "Even though the prime minister did not raise an objection to delisting the North, the President surely understands the prime minister's feelings. The prime minister got the feeling that delisting was unlikely to occur for the present."

Fukuda since taking office as prime minister has made a clear departure from the Abe administration's "pressure-oriented" line toward the North and has indicated that he would attach importance to dialogue. In a CNN interview given during his U.S. visit, Fukuda said, "If North Korea continues to possess nuclear weapons, it would cease to exist."

On Dec. 5, the Korean Central News Agency issued a rebuttal to that remark by Fukuda. It was the North's first criticism of Fukuda. This criticism is taken as forestalling the move by Japan and the U.S. after the bilateral summit meeting to jointly assume a tough stance toward North Korea.

(5) One step forward toward transparency of political funds with agreement reached between ruling and opposition parties on revising political funds law

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
December 6, 2007

The Diet affairs chiefs from the six parties that make up the ruling and opposition camps yesterday reached a basic agreement to a bill revising the Political Funds Control Law. The bill is aimed at widening the coverage of receipts subject to disclosure. The bill is expected to be enacted during the current session of the Diet.

Ambiguity was left as to whether receipts for payments of 10,000 yen or below would be required. However, the ruling and opposition blocs came to terms with each other in their efforts to somehow produce results in the current session of the Diet, where the ruling bloc holds a majority in the Lower House, but the Upper House is under the opposition parties' control.

The new political fund control system requires political organizations represented by Diet members and candidates for national elections to obtain and keep receipts for all payments (excluding the personnel expenses). In the case of receipts for the payment of 10,000 yen or above, those receipts should be attached to a report on political funds and be made open to the public. In the past receipts for the payment of 50,000 yen or above have been disclosed, but under the new system, the scope of disclosure will be broadened.

As for receipts for the payment of one yen to 10,000 yen, those receipts will be disclosed conditionally. The conditions for disclosure will be discussed at a third body (which is tentatively called a committee on appropriate political funds), which is to be established in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It will be the ministry of internal affairs or each prefectural administration commissions who will actually decide whether to disclose receipts.

The compromise reached this time between the ruling and opposition parties reflects their stance of working together in areas where they can cooperate.

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Main points in agreement between the ruling and opposition parties on political funds

Organizations affected

1. Fund management organizations of Diet members and candidates for the Diet

2. Political organizations represented by Diet members and others and their branches in electoral districts

3. Political organizations recommending Diet members and others  
Political funds auditors (tentative name) registered at a third agency examine every receipt for every expenditure (excluding the personnel costs).

Receipts for the payment of 10,000 yen or above should be attached to reports on political funds and be disclosed.

Requests for disclosure of receipts for the payment of below 10,000 yen made by means of abuse of authority or going against public order and morality will be restricted.

Making a copy of reports on political funds when reading them should be allowed.

The new political funds control system is expected to be applied to reports on political funds for 2008 and beyond.

(6) Administrative Reform Minister Watanabe fighting single-handedly in face of strong resistance from government agencies

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
December 6, 2007

A tug-of-war over administrative reform between the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei) and government agencies is intensifying. In the final stage, bureaucrats, in fear they might lose their vested interests, are putting up strong resistance to the government's plans to streamline independent administrative corporations and to restrict the amakudari practice (the practice of former government officials finding employment in the private sector). Work to compile a package of reform plans is rough-going. Some lawmakers expect Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda or Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura to display leadership, but coordination work has been left in the hands of State Minister in Charge of Administrative Reform Yoshimi Watanabe, throwing the situation deeper into confusion.

Watanabe: "Since the soccer lottery (called toto) project by the National Agency for the Advancement of Sports and Health has been dogged by net losses carried forward, the project should be immediately abolished."



Education, culture, Sports and S&T Minister Kisaburo Tokai: "I would like to reach a conclusion by FY2010. The project is expected to accrue profits this year, so if the project is stopped now, the public burden will become heavier."

Watanabe met separately with Tokai and Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Akira Amari yesterday to discuss the issue of streamlining independent administrative corporations. Tokai agreed only to a plan to abolish the National Institute of Multimedia Education. Amari opposed a plan to transfer the Nippon Export and Investment Insurance into a special corporation wholly owned by the government, claiming: "Under this plan, another special corporation would be established. I cannot understand." Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare Yoichi Masuzoe, who held negotiations with Watanabe on Dec. 3, made an inspection of the

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Kanagawa Center, in which the Employment and Human Resources Development Organization of Japan has provided vocational training. On the planned reorganization plan, Masuzoe expressed his view that it would be difficult to reach a conclusion in a short period of time, remarking: "We need to consider it as part of the entire government."

An aide to Watanabe murmured: "The Prime Minister's Office (Kantei) should offer a helping hand now." But a senior government official said: "We expect the administrative reform minister will make one more effort," indicating that he would take a wait-and-see attitude for a while. Some have begun to think it might be difficult to finalize a package of reform plans by the end of the year.

Chief cabinet secretary also remains silent

Discussion on a plan to establish a government-private sector resource exchange center to offer outplacement service for all public servants under the unified system is also going nowhere. Watanabe said in a meeting of experts yesterday that he would include in a final report measures to: (1) immediately ban a repeated outplacement service for the same person; and (2) award the post of vice minister at the center to a civilian. Watanabe grumbled: "Although I conveyed my idea to the chief cabinet secretary on the previous day, I have yet to receive his answer."

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The chief cabinet secretary indicated in a press briefing yesterday that there is no need to specify the issue of repeated outplacement service in the final report, saying: "This issue is nothing to do with the function of the center."

Concern about image of negative stance about administrative reform

The government's Council on Regulatory Reform also held an open debate with the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare on deregulating the double-billing system and reforming the nursing system, but no agreement was reached. Chairman Takao Kusakari met Machimura, his junior in Hibiya High School, on Dec. 1 and asked him to offer cooperation in finalizing the second report with recommendations. But Machimura only said: "We need to consider it, but ..."

The ruling camp is not so eager for administrative reform now. In the aftermath of its crushing defeat in the July House of Councillors election, the ruling parties tend to give priority to measures to stimulate local economies over administrative reform. Even so, with an eye to the next Lower House election, they want to avoid giving the image that the ruling camp is negative about administrative reform.

New Komeito Secretary General Kazuo Kitagawa said in a press conference yesterday: "I cannot understand why the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, & Transport has presented a zero reply" about the review of independent administrative corporations, posing questions about the posture of Transport Minister Tetsuzo Fuyushiba of the New Komeito.

(7) Government panel recommends easing requirements for daycare center admission as part of child-rearing support measures

NIKKEI (Top Play) (Full)  
December 7, 2007

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The government's Council for the Promotion of Regulatory Reform, chaired by Nippon Yusen K.K. Chairman Takao Kusakari, released its second package of recommendations yesterday. The report calls for drastically reforming the daycare system to increase child-rearing support. Specifically, it proposes introducing a system to enable parents to sign up directly with government-certified daycare centers and easing child-care enrollment requirements. The report also recommends the creation of a national registration system for foreign residents in Japan, whose number is now over 2 million, with the aim of protecting their rights. Against the backdrop of the birthrate declining and the population aging, the panel gives priority to measures to secure workforce and to strengthen Japanese firms' international competitiveness.

The panel plans to submit its second package to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda in mid-December. Based on these proposals, government agencies will compile three-year regulatory reform plans by March 2008.

In the medical and welfare sectors, the report calls for changing day nursery regulations in response to the increasing variety of working patterns, as represented by the rising number of working parents. As a specific measure, the council proposes relaxing the qualifications for parents to register their children in daycare. Under the current system, only parental guardians working full-time are eligible to register their children in government-certified facilities in principle, but under the proposed regulation, parents working part-time would also become eligible. If part-timers, whose number is about 9.5 million or one-quarter of the work force, are allowed to place their children in certified daycare centers, which charge lower than other private facilities, this deregulation may work effectively as a countermeasure to the falling birthrate.

Reportedly, 18,000 children are on the waiting list. To alleviate the shortage in child-care facilities, the council calls for easing standards for establishing a child-care center and increase facilities. It is now regulated that a space of 3.3 square meters is needed for one child. But the report defines this standard as groundless. The council will request the standards be eased starting in FY2009.

To give parents more freedom of choice, the council proposes revising the current system under which local governments assign children to specific centers into a new system to enable parents to sign up directly with daycare facilities.

The proposal in the report for the creation of a national registration system for foreign residents in Japan is aimed at keep track of them. Currently, relevant local governments keep registration data for foreign residents, but foreigners are not required to submit moving-out or moving-in notifications, as well as to update their records on births, deaths and divorces. Further, marriages between Japanese and foreign citizens are not recognized as households, so there are cases in which procedures for taxation, health insurance admission, and local school enrollment are not properly carried out.

The alien registration system was introduced in 1952. At that time, the measure was aimed at immigration control, and there was no assumption of an increase in international marriages or changes of address. The report proposes the establishment of a basic resident

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register for foreigners, similar to the system for Japanese citizens. At the request of the regulatory reform panel, the Justice

Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs have already agreed to examine introducing a registration system for foreigners and aim to submit related bills in FY2008.

In the trade area, the report calls for reviewing the customs-clearance system to activate physical distribution, including a measure to abolish the prior notification system in the case of goods-clearance procedure taken outside business hours.

In a press conference yesterday, Kusakari said that the panel has already agreed on easing the qualifications to attain a childcare certificate and other deregulatory measures. But on such bold reform plans as allowing a hospital to have two different systems for medical bills - one with medical insurance and the other without it - and as changing the daycare system, relevant government agencies, such as the Health, Labor and Trade Ministry, have put up strong resistance, so stormy negotiations are expected.

Key points in the second package of recommendations

? Relax child-care enrollment requirements at government-certified facilities, and introduce a system of direct contract between parents and child-care facilities

? Create a national registration system for foreign residents.

? Improve the current notification system for customs clearance outside business hours. Review the bonded transportation system.

? Establish a school evaluation system and a teacher evaluation system.

? Make the management of agricultural cooperatives more transparent and sound.

? Ease the qualifications to attain a childcare certificate.

? Total lift of the on introducing a double-billing system.

(8) Okinawa pressured, sweetened for base relocation

ASAHI (Page 39) (Full)  
December 3, 2007

"What's this all about!"

On Jan. 19, Takemasa Moriya, 63, who was administrative vice defense minister, was at the prime minister's office. Moriya there blazed away at senior officials from the city of Nago in Okinawa Prefecture.

It was right after a consultative meeting of officials from the government and Okinawa's prefectural and municipal governments on a plan to relocate the U.S. military's Futenma airfield in the middle part of Okinawa's main island to Henoko Point in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago.

In May last year, Japan and the United States agreed on a plan to build a V-shaped pair of airstrips as an alternative for Futenma airfield to be relocated to Nago. In the consultative meeting, the government explained the new airfield plan and then showed environmental assessment procedures and other steps to Futenma relocation.

The consultative meeting was followed by an off-the-record informal meeting. Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro said there, "We want the

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construction site moved to a southwestern offshore area."

The Nago mayor's proposal irritated Moriya. "I felt the pressure of holding down localities that do not follow the government," one senior official of Nago City recalled.

"If the runway is largely out to the sea, local people against the Futenma relocation will stand against that to block the construction work," Moriya said. Local communities want the new facility moved out to the sea to abate noise. Their face-off came to the surface in that meeting.

Okinawa is said to be one of the most important themes for Moriya as a defense bureaucrat. In 1995, a local schoolgirl was raped by U.S.

servicemen in Okinawa. Since that incident, Moriya has tackled base realignment and reduction.

Masanori Yoshimoto, who was a lieutenant governor of Okinawa Prefecture, appreciates Moriya. "Mr. Moriya and others were the first to discuss Okinawa's base issues from the perspective of defense policy." Moriya himself said, "I will never back down from Okinawa."

However, the Futenma relocation plan hit snags. Moriya's relations with local officials gradually worsened. At the Defense Ministry, he excluded disagreeing senior officials.

In the summer of 2005, Moriya, the then administrative vice defense minister, was looking for a new relocation site for Futenma. One day, Moriya called in the Defense Facilities Administration Agency director general to his room. "I'd like you to retire," Moriya told the DFAA director general. It was a de facto dismissal. The DFAA chief was pushing for an offshore reclamation plan that respected an agreement with the base-hosting local communities.

When the realignment talks were going on, there was a rumor going around in Nago City's Henoko district, where Futenma airfield was initially planned to be relocated for its heliport functions. The rumor was: "Compensation for the Futenma relocation is 100 million yen per household." It was a plan to move all local residents of Henoko to somewhere else along with the construction of a new base there. This idea sometimes came up and went out in the past years.

The government has not formally discussed the idea of moving all those Henoko residents. Several years ago, however, one senior official of the Defense Agency at that time heard from Moriya about the idea. "It's institutionally difficult to move all the people there," the official said to Moriya. "Moreover," the official went on, "they would get angry." With this, the official expostulated Moriya. However, Moriya had no ear.

Meanwhile, a local constructor close to Moriya persuaded local residents and often called at the Defense Agency. This constructor brought a bundle of signatures from local residents approving of their move. At the Defense Agency, senior officials met the constructor. One of them declined to accept the signatures, saying, "It's impossible." Moriya later told one of those senior officials, "Don't be so hard (on the constructor)."

Henoko is a coastal community populated by more than 400 households. "Compensation with 100 million yen per household is not high, considering the enormous cost of base construction." This was

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Moriya's way of thinking.

"If the (Okinawa-based) Marines are relocated to Guam, Okinawa's business communities will also have access to construction projects there." In the spring of last year, Moriya's words were transmitted through an official to local constructors opposing the government's relocation plan. The planned Marine relocation from Okinawa to Guam is said to cost 1 trillion yen, including housing construction. If Okinawa agrees to Moriya's relocation idea, there will be progress in the Marine relocation to Guam, and local business communities will profit. Moriya thought to sweeten Okinawa.

Moriya got into the complicated interests over defense procurement, and he tried to force his way through to move the bases. "I wanted to help Okinawa stand on its own feet even without bases," Moriya said right before his arrest. There are now various expectations among local business communities over the huge amount of money for base relocation. The Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office is also investigating the defense interests over base relocation.

(9) Detachment base commander yesterday evening attends wining and dining session with company executive: "It was a shared-costs party," says attendant

It was found that eight senior officers assigned to the Air Self-Defense Force's Shariki Detachment Base in Tsugaru City, Aomori Prefecture, attended a wining and dining session at a hot-springs inn in the city, along with executives of a company that receives orders for base-related services. Attendants include base Commander Masaru Ota (lieutenant colonel) and the president of the company. Ota said that his attendance at the party does not infringe on the code of ethics for SDF personnel, claiming, "We all paid 5,000 yen each as our participation fee." In view of the facts that lavish entertainment of former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya by a trading company has become a problem only recently and party hostesses were also at the session, the wining and dining session joined by ASDF officers and company executives will likely cause a controversy.

The wining and dining session in question was held to celebrate the opening of a branch office of Daikyo Seibi (head office in Tokyo), a defense-related company, near the detachment base.

The commander responded to an interview by Asahi Shimbun in Tsugaru City. He explained that eight ASDF personnel, including officers assigned to the base, including himself, and young ASDF members, attended the session. Ten persons, including President Numamoto, attended from Daikyo Seibi. Attendants from the ASDF were quoted as having received invitation for the celebration party in advance.

The wining and dining session started at 6:30 p.m. Several party hostesses were also there. The session ended in about two hours. The ASDF participants returned to their barracks by a bus provided by the inn.

SCHIEFFER